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RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSB #0180/01 0661526  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 061526Z MAR 08  
FM AMEMBASSY HARARE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2550  
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE  
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 1865  
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 1800  
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 1925  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0504  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1202  
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1559  
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 1981  
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4412  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC  
RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1052  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC

UNCLAS HARARE 000180

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR S.HILL  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS  
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B.PITTMAN  
TREASURY FOR J.RALYEA AND T.RAND  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR L.DOBBS AND E.LOKEN  
COMMERCE FOR BECKY ERKUL

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E.O. 12958: N/A  
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SUBJECT: Voter Registration: A Flawed Process

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Introduction  
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11. Newspapers and NGOs have reported in the last several weeks serious flaws in the Zimbabwean registration process which ended February 13. Anecdotal evidence corroborates these reports. Problems include absence of names of registered voters on voter rolls, ghost voters appearing on the rolls, and refusal of election officials to register qualified voters.

12. Although the Zimbabwe Election Commission extended voter registration from February 7 to February 13 in order to accommodate the many people who had not managed to register to vote, this extension did not cure myriad problems existing in the registration process. Embassy locally employed staff provided some anecdotes that illustrate the problems.

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Confusion over documentation  
and logistics for Registration  
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13. POL assistant, with her husband, visited their polling station in a low density suburb of Harare on February 4 to confirm that their names were on the ward voters roll. The couple had voted in previous elections, and therefore their names should have been on the roll. This was not the case and they had to reregister. Surprisingly, the names of the brothers of POL assistant's husband, who left the country in the 1990s, were both on the roll, although they had never registered to vote before leaving the country. The couple pointed this fact out to the ZEC officials and was told that there was nothing that they could do to ensure that their relatives' names were deleted from the roll.

14. Re-registering was not an easy task for POL assistant and her

husband. They were asked to prove citizenship by producing their passports; election officials told them that their driver's licenses which have their national identity numbers were insufficient. One of the officials admonished them not to complain; she had been "shouted at" the whole day by white people who claimed their names had been erroneously omitted from the roll since they had voted in previous elections. POL assistant and her husband were not given any receipts for registration and instead were asked to return three days later to collect the receipts. POL assistant returned to the polling center on Thursday February 7 to collect them, only to be told that she and her husband needed to submit further proof of residence. After providing additional documentation, they received their receipts eight days after they had initially visited the center.

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Registering Turns into a  
Wild Goose Chase for Many  
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¶5. Before POL assistant and her husband left the polling station, another woman entered and complained that she had been sent to three different centers after being told at each place that she was in the wrong polling station. She told the officials that she was not leaving until they had resolved the issue. Ultimately, officials called one of the previous polling stations and told her to return there.

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Other Anecdotal Information from  
Locally Employed Staff  
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¶6. An Embassy household staff member who was born in Zimbabwe and had voted in the past was told he could not register to vote because he was not a citizen. Election officials based this determination on the fact that his parents were born in Mozambique. He was asked to fill out an application for citizenship and told to go to the Registrar General's office to get his citizenship papers. Of the 7 other people in line to register, two others were also denied registration because of foreign parentage. (Note: Last year, the Registrar General denied citizenship to Trevor Ncube, publisher of The Independent, because his parents had been born in Mozambique. The Zimbabwean High Court subsequently ruled that since Ncube was born in Zimbabwe, he was entitled to citizenship. End Note.)

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Comment  
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¶6. Anecdotal evidence confirms the judgment of civil society organizations and the MDC that the registration process was seriously flawed. It appears clear that numerous individuals, qualified to vote, were unable to register, particularly in urban areas. In the absence of an audit, it is impossible to determine how many ghost voters are listed on the voter rolls.

McGEE